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PERSONALIA IN ORNITHOLOGY — REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE ON BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY.¹

BY T. S. PALMER.

THE term 'personalia' is employed in several foreign journals to include biographical notices, accounts of collecting expeditions and personal notes regarding the activities of ornithological workers in the museum or in the field. Such data though brief are not only interesting, but often of much historical value in shedding light on the progress of ornithological science. Too little attention has hitherto been paid in this country to the personal side of ornithological activity, or to the circumstances under which the specimens which form the basis of our systematic work have been collected. For a century and a half we have been so occupied with the making of ornithology that we have had little time to consider the makers of the science.

If more were known of the circumstances under which certain type specimens were collected or described and more facts were available regarding the methods of work of early ornithologists and the routes of field collectors much of the uncertainty concerning the type localities of some species would disappear and some of the troublesome questions in synonymy would be cleared up.

The time is at hand when more information along these lines will be demanded. In revising groups of birds it becomes necessary to review the results of earlier workers to ascertain where the specimens were collected, in order to determine the type localities of these species and tell whether or not they were different from the material under examination. With the greatly increased popular interest in ornithology there is also a demand on the part of teachers and general readers for more information regarding the personal side of bird study, for details which will make an author mean something more than a mere name, which will make him stand out as a human being and which will answer inquiries regarding his appearance, personal characteristics and methods of work.

¹ Presented at the 34th Stated Meeting of the A. O. U., Philadelphia, Nov. 16, 1916.

The names of Audubon, Baird and Coues at once call to mind a host of incidents associated with their work, but the names of Boddaert Brünnich and Pontoppidan recall little more to the average reader than obscure references in the Check-List.

At the 33d Annual Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union held in San Francisco in May 1915, a Committee on Biography and Bibliography was appointed consisting of Palmer, Cooke Deane, Richmond and Stone. The necessity for such a committee became evident during the preparation of the Ten Year Index to 'The Auk,' when in order to bring the data regarding authors and biographies up to the requirements of modern bibliography and to the standard of the rest of the Index it became necessary to add several members to the Index Committee to assist in completing names and collecting biographical data. The information thus obtained was utilized in the Index of Biographies published in the introduction to the Ten Year Index (pp. xi-xxiii) and in revising the list of deceased members of the Union in 'The Auk' for April, 1915.

In order to outline the work of the committee, a letter was addressed by the chairman on September 30, 1915, to each of the members calling attention to the fact that the duties intrusted to the committee necessitated a definite plan of work in biography and bibliography; that in biography the first duty was to assist the editor of 'The Auk' in the preparation of current obituary notices, in bibliography it was evident that the committee had neither the time nor means to undertake a comprehensive work such as that projected by the late Dr. Elliott Coues, but that a practical plan could probably be worked out which would result in a material contribution to existing bibliographies of ornithology. A tentative plan was suggested which met the approval of the members and with some minor modifications has formed the basis of the activities of the year. Under this plan the work was distributed under three headings — Biography, Bibliography and Manuscripts — including ten subjects, as follows:

(a) In Biography

- 1 Biographies, including obituary notices of A. O. U. members.
- 2 Brief sketches of the foreign members of the A. O. U.
- 3 An index to published portraits of A. O. U. members.

- 4 An index to published portraits of other ornithologists.
- 5 An index to the published correspondence of Audubon.
- (b) In Bibliography — a bibliography of bibliographies including
 - 6 A brief list of the more important bibliographies of American and Foreign birds including those in State lists.
 - 7 An index to published bibliographies of authors.
 - 8 An index to information on routes of ornithological collectors.
 - 9 Special bibliographies of subjects not included in existing bibliographies, for example bird photography, hybridism and indexes to papers on the more important collections of birds, type specimens, etc.
- (c) In Manuscripts
 - 10 Investigation of the present location and condition of some of the more important ornithological manuscripts, published and unpublished, including the papers and correspondence of Bendire, Cooper, Coues, Wilson and others.

WORK OF THE YEAR.

Before reviewing the work accomplished during the past year it is proper to refer to the severe loss which the committee has sustained in the death on March 30, 1916, of Prof. Wells W. Cooke, one of the most active members. Specially qualified for research of this kind, a tireless worker, and deeply interested in the topics assigned him, his loss has been a serious handicap. Naturally the work in which he was engaged, the preparation of a list of bibliographies in State lists and an index to publications containing information on routes of ornithological collectors, has been suspended since his death.

Of the ten subjects mentioned in the above outline of work, five have received special attention and some progress made in each case.

Biography.—The published records of the Union should contain some notice, however brief, of every person who is a member of the Union at the time of death. At present these notices appear in 'The Auk,' and it is often difficult for the editor, in addition to his

other duties, to collect the necessary data for a biographical sketch. An important part of the duties of the Committee on Biography is to assist in the preparation of obituary notices.

Even more interest attaches to the personal history and work of members who are still alive than to those whose labors have been completed. In these days of "Who's Who" and similar biographical dictionaries it might seem that facts regarding the biography of members were readily accessible, but such proves not to be the case. The Committee has, therefore, undertaken the preparation of an index of the published biographical sketches of members of the Union. This index now contains references to sketches of nearly all of the Fellows, about one third of the Members and a few of the Associates. Every member of the Union should have on file with the Secretary a record of his full name and address and a reference to any sketch of his work which may have been published.

Portraits.—Portraits of A. O. U. members are published from time to time in various places, but are widely scattered and very few of them are mentioned in the great index of portraits prepared by the American Library Association. As one feature of its work the Committee has undertaken an index to published portraits of A. O. U. members. This index now contains entries for about 170 members, 113 of whom are living and 57 deceased. In this list are 30 Fellows, 11 Corresponding Fellows, 28 Members, and 34 Associates. The entries in the deceased list are about equally divided between Fellows, Honorary Fellows, Corresponding Fellows, and Associates.

Audubon Correspondence.—Many letters of Audubon have been published from time to time and a considerable volume of his correspondence is now available to the general reader. Mr. Ruthven Deane who, by reason of his familiarity with Auduboniana, is specially qualified for the task has undertaken to prepare a list of letters of Audubon which have thus far appeared in print.

Bibliography.—Bibliographies and indexes form the tools of the scientific student and are as essential for his work as a good camera to a photographer or a telescope to an astronomer. Attention has thus far been concentrated on the preparation of a list of author's bibliographies. In the lists of their papers which have

been published by a number of ornithologists appear many titles which are easily overlooked and are not included in ordinary bibliographies. About 40 such lists have already been found and the number of titles included in them is about 6,800.

Manuscripts.—Manuscripts, like type specimens, are unique and highly prized by their owners. As a rule not many ornithological manuscripts are apt to be found in any one place outside the archives of a few of the larger museums. The manuscripts which are likely to possess the greatest historical interest are diaries, personal letters from ornithologists, and copies of unpublished, or in a few instances published works. The Committee has been successful in locating several interesting manuscripts which may be briefly mentioned.

In the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley, Calif.—

- (a) The unpublished manuscript and plates of L. Belding's Water Birds of California.
- (b) The unpublished manuscript and plates of Col. A. J. Grayson's Birds of Mexico.

Both of these manuscripts are in an excellent state of preservation, are carefully preserved in steel cases, and are readily accessible.

In the possession of Mr. W. O. Emerson, Haywards, Calif.—

- (a) A brief unpublished description of the 'Quesal' by Charles Lucien Bonaparte.
- (b) Manuscript copies of Bonaparte's Am. Ornithology, vols. II, III and IV, interesting historically because they are in Bonaparte's handwriting.
- (c) Manuscript of Dr. J. G. Cooper's Report on the Survey of Oregon and Washington and the Birds of California (the latter incomplete).
- (d) Several diaries of Dr. Cooper, 1858–1860.

In the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.—

- (a) Part of the original diary of Titian Ramsay Peale on Long's Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1 vol. May 3 to Aug. 1, 1819.
- (b) Four volumes of the diary of Peale on the Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1839 to 1842.

Apparently the complete diaries of this latter expedition filled 8 volumes of which the 2d, 3d, 5th and 7th are in the Library of Congress.

- (c) Fourteen volumes of papers of Dr. Jean Louis Berlandier, including an unpublished work in 7 volumes entitled 'Voyage au Mexique,' 1826 to 1834, containing a full account of Berlandier's travels during his first seven years in Mexico.

In the possession of Kenneth F. Beal, Branchville, Md.—

- (a) A valuable set of diaries of the late Prof. F. E. L. Beal extending over a period of nearly 40 years.

In the possession of the chairman of the committee.—

- (a) A copy of the field diary of Titian R. Peale on his trip to Florida in 1824-25.

Inquiries concerning the papers of the late Dr. Elliott Coues have thus far met with no success, and the whereabouts of his correspondence is at present unknown.

The Committee has received a generous offer of the papers and correspondence of the late Major Charles E. Bendire on condition that satisfactory arrangements can be made for their permanent preservation in a place where they will be safe and readily accessible. It is hoped that the acquisition of this valuable collection of the papers of one of our most prominent field ornithologists can be consummated in the near future.

FUTURE WORK.

The work for the immediate future will be continued along the lines indicated, and will be expanded from time to time as opportunity offers. In biography, the series of brief sketches of foreign members should be taken up as soon as the necessary data can be obtained. The deceased list of the Union now includes about 250 names and sketches of about 190 of these persons have been published in 'The Auk' and an Index to them in the introduction of the Ten Year Index to 'The Auk.' With the index to published biographies of living members now being prepared, members of the Union will have ready references to most of the biographical material published in this country regarding the membership of

the A. O. U. In addition much material has appeared in the pages of 'The Ibis,' 'London Field' and other foreign journals and in foreign collections of biography all of which should be made accessible.

This work should not be confined to members of the Union but should be extended at least to include all persons whose names are associated with systematic work on North American birds. Considerable material has already been collected along this line by the chairman of the committee. With the activity now displayed in the study of South American ornithology by several museums in this country it would undoubtedly be helpful to have as much information as possible relative to the work of those who have collected or described material from the wonderfully rich region south of Panama.

It is rather remarkable that although biography forms such an important part of the literature in a general library, and so much has been published regarding the lives of workers in astronomy, botany, and medicine, such information concerning ornithologists is so scattered and in many cases so fragmentary. Particularly is this true of American ornithologists only half a dozen of whom — Audubon, Bachman, Baird, Boardman, Scott, Wilson, and possibly one or two others, have been considered sufficiently important to have special volumes devoted to their lives. Audubon and Wilson have each been the subject of several volumes, while the labors of such prominent workers as Dr. Coues and others are recorded only in memorial addresses or in brief sketches in journals or reviews. More attention has been paid to this subject in England and Germany where biographical information is published more fully and thus made more accessible. It is something more than mere gratification of curiosity to be able to find something about the work of ornithologists who have become eminent or whose labors are now finished. Although it may be interesting to know that Brünnich described the Loon (*Gavia immer*), and the genus *Plautus* for the Great Auk, and that his work is commemorated in the name of one of the species of murre, it is more important to know that Dr. Morton Thrane Brünnich, author of the genus containing the emblem of the A. O. U. was a contemporary of Linnaeus, that he was one of the leading Danish zoölogists and that he

died in 1827 at the age of 90 (an age attained by few ornithologists). In order to compare his work with that of modern ornithologists it is necessary to know something of his methods and the material at his disposal and it is also important to have access to a sketch of his life in English for the benefit of those who cannot read his biography published in Danish.

It will soon be time to prepare a new edition of the Check-List. In addition to a reëxamination of some of the type localities which evidently require revision, the next edition should show the date when the type was collected of each species which was based on a definite specimen so as to indicate whether or not the bird was in breeding plumage. Whenever possible a statement should be added to indicate whether or not the specimen is now extant. Much of this information can be secured only through collateral sources of information, by examination of special papers on type specimens and museum collections, by study of the routes of collectors and by examination of original field diaries. Research along these lines promises some interesting and important results and the desirability of the early preparation of the biographies and routes of collectors and of special papers on collections is self evident.

To the officers of the Union the committee on biography can render much service: To the secretary in perfecting the record of full names and addresses of the members, to the treasurer in recommending new names for membership and in following up some of the members who have dropped out, and to the editor in supplying data for obituary notices and in preparing notices of deceased members.

In this connection an invitation is extended to any person who may be interested in the work to coöperate with the committee in its projects in biography or bibliography; and especially to any person who may know of the existence of ornithological manuscripts or diaries, to communicate with the committee in order to assist in preserving and making known material which may be of great historical value in working out some of the problems of systematic ornithology.